

FERRARO, GERRARDINE

DRAWING 26

COMPARISON

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Abraham Lincoln Comparisons

Geraldine Ferraro

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

Brooklyn: Sometimes I think Bill Reel writes for pure shock value. I admit it works. I bit. I was shocked that he can take credit away from Ferraro because she has an interest other than motherhood. I, too, am glad that my mom was there whenever I needed her. But I am also glad that my dad was there when I needed him. Reel says that parenthood is the biggest job there is. It takes fatherhood as well as motherhood to make parenthood. If we are going to berate Ferraro for not being a full-time mother, we also must berate Cuomo, Reagan and Lincoln for sometimes being away from home on their way to the top.

Toni Marco

Daily News
Voice of the People
7/26/84

710 Sunday Times
8/26/84

When Moral Ideas And Politics Clash

To the Editor:

In 1960, Kennedy the candidate lived under the historical shadow of Protestant fears about Al Smith's Catholicism. Kennedy the President proved them groundless. Now some Catholic spokesmen fear instead that current Catholic politicians may not be Catholic enough when they personally oppose abortions but will not vote to outlaw them.

True, many Catholics, according to the polls, accept abortions to save the life of a mother or as a response to rape, so the hedging of Catholic mainline politicians on this matter is not likely to lose them many votes. But does this mean that they must be opportunists, indifferent to the influence of moral ideas on their political convictions? It is useful to consider Lincoln's handling of an analogous dilemma.

Lincoln was morally opposed to slavery and made it the basis of his campaign against Senator Douglas. Yet he accepted the legal obligations to return fugitive slaves to their owners. He denounced the Supreme Court's decision indirectly invalidating the Missouri Compromise, yet he was later willing to consider guaranteeing slavery in the South if it would preserve the Union.

The Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr was a persistent defender of Lincoln's way of thinking because "considerations of moderation" rightly entered into the application of moral ideas to political life. In Niebuhr's time, it was the Protestant pastors of the social gospel, with their enthusiasm for prohibition and pacifism, who most needed his realism in the 1930's.

Now, it seems, some Catholic moralists need a Lincoln or a Niebuhr to show how mediated the relation between morality and politics must be. Lincoln's position reflected his sense of complexity, not his moral diffidence. Lord Charnwood called it "a deadly moderation" that knew precisely where it stood and why it stood there.

Geraldine A. Ferraro and Mario Cuomo will need the understanding of a Niebuhr and the close thinking of a Lincoln to meet their critics, but so far they are at least right to know that politics cannot simply accept moral ideas without any work of translation.

CUSHING STROUT

Ithaca, N.Y., Aug. 14, 1984

The writer is E.I. White Professor of American Studies and Humane Letters at Cornell University.

N.Y. Times

9/9/84

Of Ferraro, Cuomo and Moral Issues Confused With Dogma

To the Editor:

In his Aug. 26 letter, Cushing Strout raised the issue of a Catholic politician's responsibility to his or her moral beliefs (specifically, abortion) and sought to illuminate it by reviewing Lincoln's approach to slavery.

Lincoln was morally opposed to slavery, wrote Professor Strout, but was willing to make compromises. He accepted the legal obligation to return slaves to their owners and even considered guaranteeing slavery in the South if it would preserve the Union. The professor might also have cited Lincoln's support for compensation of slave owners upon the loss of a valuable asset.

What is disappointing about Professor Strout's comparison is that he does not develop it to a satisfactory conclusion but simply ends by stating that politicians like Geraldine Ferraro and Mario Cuomo "... are at least right to know that politics cannot simply accept moral ideas without any work of translation." I would like to attempt some translating.

Representative Ferraro and Governor Cuomo have stated that they are

personally opposed to abortion but will not impose their religious beliefs on others. At the outset, they have based their position on a false assumption, since opposition to abortion is not a religious belief. It is one of many moral issues which the Catholic Church has taken a stand on — as have other faiths and other groups with no Catholic connection.

Such politicians are confusing moral issues with dogmas, e.g., the Trinity, the Immaculate Conception, the divinity of Christ. The church has frequently taken a stand on similar moral issues. In his encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, Pope Leo XIII espoused the cause of the working man, including the right to a just wage. Racial and religious discrimination and nuclear war have also been condemned, both by the Papacy and by official and unofficial congregations of bishops.

If these are truly "religious beliefs," then they are daily being "imposed on others," such as employers and landlords, who may sincerely believe that they have the right to control their own businesses or rental properties. One must conclude that Catholic

politicians should either look for a new argument or, better yet, have the courage of their moral convictions.

Which brings us back to President Lincoln. True, Lincoln was willing to compromise some of his positions on slavery, but he did so only to effect his overriding goal — slavery's eventual abolition. Similarly, if a person in public office is morally convinced that abortion is the unwarranted taking of innocent human life, that person should seek to eliminate, so far as is reasonably possible, what he or she perceives to be a grievous wrong.

Compromises may have to be made, the most obvious exceptions being in cases of rape, incest, mental instability or danger to the life of the mother, but if one honestly believes in the moral rectitude of a cause, one should not cravenly use religion as an excuse for inaction.

If Abraham Lincoln had taken the same position toward slavery that Mr. Cuomo and Mrs. Ferraro have taken toward abortion, slavery could well have extended into the 20th century.

ALFRED G. BOYLAN
Rochester, Aug. 30, 1984

